

DISTRICT PAVING

History of Systems Adopted by the Government at

THE WORK UNDER OLD CORPORATION

Smooth Pavements, the Concrete and the Asphalt

SKETCH BY MR. BAILEY

The following history of pavements laid in the District, prepared by Mr. George H. Bailey, formerly in charge of the street department, was incorporated in the annual report of Capt. Beach, the Engineer Commissioner, it being believed that Mr. Bailey's sketch contains information not easily accessible elsewhere.

There were laid by the old corporation of Washington and Georgetown 23,428 square yards of pavements, divided as follows: Cobble, 21,941; rubble and blue rock, 107,330; granite, 4,196; and wood, 189,820.

The following were laid by the board of public works and the first board of Commissioners:

	Square yards.
Cobble	154,618
Granite	17,436
Rubble and blue rock	96,602
Wood	25,282
Macadam	1,872,738
Concrete and nechalite	829,678

Between 1875 and 1878 wood pavements to the amount of 315,451 square yards were replaced by—

	Square yards.
Trap block	17,590
Granite block	42,341
Trap and granite	25,282
Total	215,413

So that in 1878, at the inauguration of the present form of government, the following pavements were in existence:

	Square yards.
Stone of all kinds	251,838
Macadam	200,282
Concrete and nechalite	829,678
Total	2,965,391

Smooth Pavements.

At the time the board of public works commenced operations, April, 1871, the experience with smooth pavements in this country was extremely limited. Many cities, in the west especially, had recently introduced wood pavements, which appeared to give satisfaction, but, though fully approved by the board, they were not used, as they were not long enough to test its durability. Many inventors turned their attention to perfecting this form of pavement, many patents were granted, and the District for a few years was a fertile field for testing them. Among them were—

	Square yards.
De Golyer	1,188,567
De Golyer	141,759
Taylor & Filbert	150,885
De Golyer	150,885
Smith (round block)	23,347
Morse	24,949
Morse & Stone	20,943
De Golyer	1,188,567
Flanagan	25,653
Ingersoll	21,456
De Golyer	1,188,567
Other patents not laid by old corporation	100,850

The prices for these varied from \$2 to \$20 per square yard. The most successful of these pavements were soon apparent. Within two or three years the replacement of them commenced, and, as a result, the District in 1878 and 1879 over 315,000 square yards had been removed and replaced by stone or concrete. From this time a large proportion of each annual appropriation was spent in replacing these pavements, which decayed so rapidly that many of the streets on which they had been laid became almost impassable. The condition of these streets was well described by Capt. Greene in 1881. In regard to New Jersey avenue, said he: "The road is in a state of decay, the surface is about the size of the little finger, and this was mixed with the gravel and dirt of the road and the mud of the street, and the whole is a mass of mud and dirt, and makes a black mud six inches deep, covering the whole street." Many of the wood pavements were replaced by stone or concrete. The last of these was removed in 1880.

Concrete Work.

The other forms of smooth pavements inaugurated by the corporation of Washington and by the board of public works were known as concrete pavements. These, though laid under several different patents, consisted essentially of a base of broken stone 4 to 6 inches thick, cemented together with coal tar, covered with a thin layer of concrete, and finished with pebbles or the broken stone and coal tar. The wearing surface varied according to the patents, but consisted essentially of a thin layer of concrete, and was cemented by a product of coal tar. In some of the later pavements a small percentage of the concrete was mixed with the coal tar in the wearing surface.

Original concrete pavements are thus designated:

	Square yards.
Evans	187,271.22
Parish	66,687.61
Taylor	26,134.67
Parish	191,401.09
Abbot	87,018.67
Bailey	2,801.81
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Taylor	26,134.67
Parish	191,401.09
Abbot	87,018.67
Bailey	2,801.81

In 1888, among other forms of pavement, there was known as "hydraulic base" pavement, which was specified, and Corcoran street between 15th and New Hampshire avenues was laid in this pavement in 1888, and the balance in 1889-91. The Scharf and the Filbert concrete pavements stood much better. Many were laid in 1872 to 1875, and were replaced for five or seven years, and quite a number of them had been laid ten and fifteen years when they were removed.

Asphalt Pavements.

Asphalt pavements as at first laid consisted of nechalite and grahamite. Nechalite is a natural bituminous limestone which is reduced to powder, placed on the street in a heated state, compressed by rollers or large iron rammers and laid on a base of hydraulic cement concrete, 6 to 8 inches thick. The following streets were laid with nechalite pavement between 1875 and 1877: Pennsylvania avenue between 1st and 6th streets; 1st street northwest between 13th and 15th streets; and Grand place, between 12th and 10th streets, amounting to 31,289 square yards. The objection to this pavement was that it was very slippery, especially in wet weather.

Asphalt pavements were laid according to specifications of August, 1878, consisted of a base of hydraulic cement concrete six inches thick and a half inches of nechalite or grahamite, the basis of which, or paving cement, was refined asphaltum mixed with residuum of petroleum, carbonate of lime, and alumina. The pavement is known as "Grahamite," invented by E. J. De Smidt. The constituents of the pavement are as follows: First, refined Trinidad asphalt; second, heavy pure petroleum oil; third, very fine white sand, about 15 per cent; fourth, phos. carbonate of lime, or 10 per cent; fifth, hydrosilicate of aluminum. By mixing petroleum oil and asphalt in the proportion of four or five parts of asphalt to one part of the matrix of the pavement called asphaltic cement is manufactured. The asphaltic cement is mixed with sand in the proportion of fifteen to one of asphalt to eight or ten of sand; the ingredients are heated separately to about 300 degrees F., and the mixing performed in a twin pug mill.

The asphalt prepared in this manner is brought to the ground in heated carts at a temperature of about 250 degrees F. It is spread in two coats; the first, about one-half inch thick, called the protecting or "base" coat, and the second, about one-half inch thick, called the wearing surface. The second coat, or wearing surface, exceeding by about two-fifths the ultimate thickness required, is carefully rolled with iron rollers and compacted by ramming or rolling. Hydraulic cement is then spread or dusted over the surface, and rolled with a heavy roller. This is especially the case on the streets where asphalt pavements have been laid from 1877 to 1887. In 1887 and 1888 a departure was made from what may be termed the standard asphalt pavement, in the use of what is known as the coal-tar distillate, which was very similar to the old Scharf and vulcanite pavements.

Comparative Durability.

In Captain Griffin's report for 1887 a statement of the comparative durability of asphalt and coal-tar pavements is given. He says: "Of the Evans pavements 157,271 square yards were resurfaced within two years after laying. The mean average expense for maintenance of 745,335 square yards is 24 cents per square yard for fifteen years. That a durable coal-tar pavement may be produced, the fact that the vulcanite pavements have only averaged 29 cents per square yard per annum for the same period of maintenance. The average cost of maintenance of 36,000 square yards of asphalt and nechalite pavements was 19 cents per square yard." The amount of coal-tar distillate pavement laid was, in 1887, 33,273 square yards, and in 1888, 87,437 square yards. These pavements were composed and laid in the following manner: They consisted of base and binder courses, the binder course being 2 to 2 1/2 inches thick, and the base course being 4 to 4 1/2 inches thick, and a wearing surface of 1 1/2 inches in thickness when compacted. The base was composed of clean broken stone that would pass through a 3/4 inch sieve, and was spread and rolled, to the depth of 4 inches, and thoroughly coated with No. 42 coal-tar paving cement in proportion of about 1 gallon to the square yard. The binder course was composed of clean broken stone, thoroughly broken and rolled, to the depth of 4 inches, and thoroughly mixed by machinery with the paving cement in about the proportion of 1 gallon of No. 42 tar to 1 cubic foot of stone. The binder course was spread upon the base course at least 2 inches thick, and immediately rammed and rolled with a heavy steam roller while in a hot, plastic condition.

Wearing Surface.

The wearing surface was composed of—

	Per cent.
Clean, sharp sand	63 to 65
Wood pavement	13 to 15
Paving cement	13 to 15
Hydraulic cement	13 to 15
Flour of subgrade	13 to 15
Flour of subgrade	13 to 15

The cost of maintenance of coal tar pavements laid in 1887 was 145 cents per square yard, and in 1888, 150 cents per square yard. The cost of maintenance of these pavements for a period of nine years. Of these pavements 14,000 yards were found so bad that they had to be removed entirely and replaced with a new pavement. In future repairs in these pavements many of the old materials were used, and this in many cases was a saving. To resurface an asphalt pavement it is only necessary to strip off the surface, and lay a new surface of about 1 1/2 inches thick, and the street is preserved. With the coal tar or concrete pavements the base binder and surface unite, forming a solid mass. If a new surface is added to the old pavement the gutters become almost obliterated, and if the gutters are cut out and replaced with a new gutter, the street is exposed to a dangerous extent. It is especially difficult to resurface a concrete roadway along a railroad track, and the only practical way is to remove the old pavement and replace it with a new pavement.

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